THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • FEBRUARY 27, 2026 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 42 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianxpress twitter.com/newindianxpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

**NO ADDL FEE FOR CHANGES WITHIN 48 HOURS OF AIR TICKET BOOKING**

**You can now cancel or change air tickets without additional charge within 48 hours of booking, subject to certain conditions, the DGCA said** | P11

**FACILITY IF DEPARTURE DATE IS OVER 7 DAYS**

Fliers will get a 'look-in option' for 48 hours after booking tickets. During this period, a passenger can cancel or amend the ticket without additional charges. "This facility shall not be available for a flight whose departure is less than 7 days for domestic flight and 15 days for international flight from booking date when ticket is booked directly through airline website"

**REGULATOR DGCA REVISES REFUND NORMS**

- "In case of purchase of ticket through travel agent/portal, onus of refund shall lie with the airlines as agents are their appointed representatives." Refund must be processed within 14 working days
- No addl fee allowed for name correction if the flier points out the error within 24 hours of booking directly through the airline's website

March 26

**OPERATIONAL DATE FOR THE NEW PASSENGER-FRIENDLY NORMS**

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

# Late-night hearing in HC over 'Kerala Story 2' release

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kochi

HOURS after a single judge of the Kerala High Court stayed the release of the movie *Kerala Story 2: Goes Beyond*, a division bench held a late-night emergency hearing of an appeal filed by producer Vipul Amrutlal Shah, seeking to quash the single judge's order. The bench, comprising justices Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and P V Balakrishnan, reserved its order.

Earlier in the day, Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas had stayed the release of the film for 15 days. The single judge passed the order on petitions filed by Sreedev Namboodiri of Kannur and Freddy V Francis of Ernakulam, challenging the theatrical, digital and satellite release.

The film is scheduled to be released on Friday. Till the division bench's judgment is pronounced, the single-judge bench's interim order will prevail and the movie cannot be released.

In the appeal before the division bench, the producer submitted that the court should allow the release as the film is scheduled to be screened in more than 1,800 theatres across the country and in 355 centres abroad. If the film is not released on the scheduled date, the makers would suffer financial losses.

Counsel for the producers submitted that the single judge erred in substituting his own assessment of the film's content for the expert determination of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), the sole statutory authority constituted under the Cinematograph Act, 1952, to examine and certify films for public exhibition. The CBFC examined the complete film, ordered several cuts, which were duly complied with, and then granted certification.

Senior Supreme Court lawyer Neeraj Kishan Kaul, appearing for Shah, said: "Today, we are 75 years into the republic. Are we so frail in this country of great harmony that we can say portrayal of a social evil in one religion, or a section of a religion, will scandalise the faith and tenets of that religion? There is nothing in the movie to denigrate the state of Kerala. It only shows a protagonist emerging from the state, and the narrative goes beyond it. If a section within a religion is shown practising a social evil, that cannot be termed an insult or denigration of the religion."

The counsel added that the CBFC had taken a clear view that the film does not denigrate the State. The protagonist is not from Kerala alone, but from other states as well.

**Justice Thomas: Could endanger public order**

Repeated portrayal of the theme in a second movie of almost the same name and concept could create contempt towards a religious group in the State and towards the State itself, promote communal and fanatical attitudes, and endanger public order, Justice Thomas said

*There is a possibility that Kerala, otherwise known for its communal harmony and friendly natives, may be perceived by viewers globally as a hub of fanaticism & communal divide*

Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas

# SC orders ban, seizure of NCERT book

Says heads must roll, slaps contempt notice on NCERT director and Secretary, Department of School Education

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday imposed a blanket ban on the NCERT's Class 8 social science text book containing a controversial section on 'corruption in the judiciary', and issued a contempt notice to the NCERT director and Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant held that the book contains "offending" material not suitable for young students in their formative years.

"As an abundant precaution, a complete blanket ban is hereby imposed on any further publication re: printing or digital dissemination of the book titled 'Exploring Society, India and Beyond'," said the order by the bench, also comprising justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi.

The SC ordered that all physical and digital copies of the book currently in circulation—including those held in storage, retail outlets, or educational institutions—be immediately seized and removed from public access.

During the hearing, the bench observed that publication of the book with offending references amounts to criminal contempt of court. The court directed the NCERT to submit the members of the national syllabus committee who approved the "offending chapter", names of the textbook development team responsible for drafting the chapter, and the original minutes of all meetings where the chapter was deliberated and finalised.

All these must be produced on March 11, the next date of hearing, it said.

"It is my duty as head of the institution to find out who is responsible; heads must roll... We won't close the case," the CJI said, adding, "We would like to have a deeper probe."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed the court that the chapter had already been withdrawn and only 32 copies had reached the market.

Blaming the NCERT for the goof-up, the bench observed that there appeared to be a deep-rooted conspiracy to demean the dignity of judiciary. "They have fired a gunshot and the judiciary is bleeding," the CJI said.

The bench refused to accept the apology tendered by the NCERT on Wednesday night, hours after the SC took suo motu cognisance of the matter. "The question as to whether the apology has been tendered genuinely... or to evade the consequences... we will consider at an appropriate stage," the order said.

**Will probe the matter and take action: Pradhan**

The Union education ministry wrote to the ministries of information and broadcasting, and electronics, asking them to stop the dissemination of the NCERT textbook through digital platforms and electronic media. Earlier in the day, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said an inquiry would be conducted and action taken against those involved in preparing the book, adding there was no intention to disrespect judiciary.

# India, Israel forge special strategic partnership

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA and Israel on Thursday elevated their ties to a "Special Strategic Partnership" during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second state visit to Israel in nine years. The move signals a deepening of cooperation across defence, trade, technology and regional connectivity, even as both sides underscored shared concerns over terrorism and instability in the Middle East.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu before his departure from Jerusalem on Thursday | PTI

Following delegation-level talks with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, Modi described the relationship as "time-tested" and rooted in trust and democratic values. "Our relationship is founded on the strong bedrock of deep trust, shared democratic values, and human sensitivities. Our bond has stood the test of every trial of time," Modi said at a joint press conference.

A series of agreements were signed to boost collaboration in trade, agriculture, energy, cyberspace and digital payments. The two sides agreed to work towards finalising a "mutually beneficial" free trade agreement.

Modi also announced the launch of a new partnership on critical and emerging technologies, aimed at accelerating cooperation in artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and critical minerals.

"I am pleased that an agreement has been reached for the use of UPI in Israel," Modi said, referring to India's digital payments interface, in a move expected to strengthen fintech linkages.

Security ties remained central to the talks. Modi reiterated India's firm opposition to terrorism in all forms. "India and Israel are completely clear that there is no place for terror in the world. In any form, in any expression, terrorism cannot be accepted."

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said mobility had emerged as a "sunshine sector" in bilateral ties. Israel will open its manufacturing and restaurant sectors to Indian workers, with over 50,000 Indian workers expected to travel to Israel over the next five years under a newly signed protocol. The leaders also reviewed progress on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and cooperation under the I2U2 framework grouping India, Israel, the UAE and the US.

**Full support to Gaza peace plan, says PM**

Modi reaffirmed India's support for peace efforts in Gaza. "India's stance is clear: humanity must never become a victim of conflict. A path to peace has been created through the Gaza Peace Plan. India has fully supported these efforts," the PM said, adding New Delhi would "continue dialogue and cooperation with all countries."

EXPRESS READ

**Welfare schemes will not be rolled back: DKS**

BENGALURU: Not a single welfare scheme of Congress govt will be rolled back, Karnataka DCM DK Shivakumar asserted in Bengaluru on Thursday P4

WITH THIS ISSUE
CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE
42 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

# Trouble for PC as ED gets prosecution sanction

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH the Centre granting sanction to prosecute former Union finance minister P Chidambaram in two separate money laundering cases, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday shared the orders with a special court in New Delhi and urged it to expedite trials. Prosecution sanction in the INX Media and Aircel-Maxis deal cases were granted on February 10. The agency has approached Centre to get prosecution sanction following a Supreme Court verdict in November 2024, which held that prosecution sanction under Section 197(1) of the CrPC is mandatory even for complaints filed under the PMLA, 2002.

In the INX Media case, the ED began probe under PMLA in 2017 based on a case registered by the CBI against INX Media and others, including Chidambaram's son Karti. The probe found that when Chidambaram was finance minister, FIPB (Foreign Investment Promotion Board) approval was granted and subsequently regularised for INX Media in alleged exchange of illegal gratification. In the Aircel-Maxis case, the ED said Chidambaram granted FIPB approval for FDI of $800 mn by Maxis into Aircel, which was way beyond his sanctioned powers as FM.

CHENNAI EXPRESS

Abhishek Sharma hits form with a half-century against Zimbabwe in the Super 8s game in Chennai on Thursday. With a late flourish from Hardik Pandiya and Tilak Varma, India scored their highest T20 World Cup total of 256 for 4. India won by 72 runs. Now, India will take on West Indies in a do-or-die encounter on Sunday | ASHWIN PRASATH

# K'taka cabinet nod to fill 56,432 vacancies in govt, process to begin in a month

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CONCEDING to pressure mounted by protesting youth, the Karnataka cabinet on Thursday approved filling up of 56,432 vacancies in various government departments, adhering to 50 per cent quota in recruitments. The process will start in 30 days.

"They are all sanctioned posts, with the Finance department giving approval to fill 24,300 posts, and 32,132 in Kalyana Karnataka region, in keeping with Article 371. The Chief Minister has given instructions to all departments to take measures to fill posts," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said, briefing the media after the cabinet meeting.

With the issue acquiring seriousness, the repercussions of delaying recruitment were discussed in the cabinet. It could backfire on the ruling dispensation, with the opposition BJP indicating it would support the protesting youth and make it a big issue, sources said.

With two cases before court, including internal quota for Scheduled Castes, and as the quota cannot go beyond 50 per cent, recruitment will be subject to the court's decision, he clarified. He said with Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot having given his nod for the Scheduled Castes(Sub-Classification) Bill, the internal quota bill of SCs, it will be incorporated in recruitment and spelt out in the notification.

"There will not be any financial burden as the posts, except for 1,000-odd newly created ones, were existing ones that fell vacant," Patil said in response to a query, adding that the government will take care of the financial issue.

The cabinet also accepted the report of the high-powered committee on Redressal of Regional Imbalance, headed by Prof M Govinda Rao which has recommended the allocation of Rs 43,914 crore. It will be adopted in the budget, Patil said.

The cabinet discussed the 'Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition Bill, 2026' known as the 'Eva Nammava Eva Nammava' Bill, 2026, but sought the Home department's opinion before it is presented at the next cabinet meeting for a final decision. P4

# Mercury shoots up in March, Bengaluru max temp is over 30 deg Celsius

MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

IT'S still February, but Bengaluru city, once known for its salubrious weather, is already feeling the heat. As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Bengaluru, from Saturday (Feb 21) onwards, the city's maximum temperature crossed 30 degrees Celsius. According to IMD officials, just before summer kicks in officially in March, the mercury suddenly shoots up in Bengaluru in February-end, with an increase in maximum temperatures. "An increase in city temperatures in February has been seen over the past two decades in the city, after its transformation as the IT capital of India. A lot of trees have been cut for development, and concretisation has increased, resulting in the creation of heat islands. Hence, there is an impact on city temperatures," said an official.

On February 21, the city recorded a maximum temperature of 30.8 degrees Celsius; on February 22, it recorded 32.4 degrees; on February 23, it was 32.8 degrees, on February 24, it was 31.1 degrees, and on February 25, the city recorded 31.6 degrees Celsius.

As per data, maximum temperature of over 34 degrees Celsius has been recorded in 2025, 2024, 2021, 2019 and 2016. An all-time high of 35.9 degrees Celsius was recorded on February 17, 2005.

Following early heat trends, health experts have warned of gastrointestinal infections during summer, and given tips to beat the summer heat like staying hydrated and avoid going out between the peak hours of noon and 3pm.

A passenger at Bengaluru's Kempegowda Bus Terminal uses an umbrella to protect herself from the summer heat on Thursday | VINOD KUMAR T

**FEB FEVER**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2018 | Feb 28 | 33°C |
| 2019 | Feb 26 | 35.5°C |
| 2020 | Feb 16 | 33.1°C |
| 2021 | Feb 27 | 34.1°C |
| 2022 | Feb 22 | 31.8°C |
| 2023 | Feb 16 | 30.9°C |
| 2024 | Feb 24 | 34.5°C |
| 2025 | Feb 20 | 34.4°C |

Max temp in Feb